

Look for Avenir I

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Born in the Oda prefecture in 1941. Between the years 1964 and 1967, he worked for Mushi Productions, and since then he has been working as a freelance animation director. He also has written many short stories and essays, among which his most notable have been, “Mobile Suit Gundam,” “Rean’s Wings,” and “Aura Battler Dunbine.”

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Sonorama Books

Look For Avenir

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Asahi Sonorama

Look For Avenir, Book 1

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Chapter 1: UNKNOWN

The metallic object that spun was colored silver. Spinning in a straight line with the autumn sun in the blue sky, it reflected an eerie light. Sending an arc of light along the antennas over the buildings...

BAM!

The rows of green lined up on the hill rose like mountains, the pine forests crumbled, turning to a rubble of asphalt and stone.

Crumble, crumble, crumble...

Tokyo's streets disappeared into the dust storm.

The silver machine that shot lasers seemed to be aiming at the former defense unit and self-defense unit buildings – which were presently in the middle of the Serjei headquarters.

Hundreds of meters in the sky, the silver ball of metal once again unleashed beams of light.

BOOM!

Mountains of dirt once again rose from the streets, pushing with them the rows of buildings like grasses in the wind.

From the impact, the underground shelterøs radar center shook, but it was still all right.

óWeøre facing an unknown flying object. Releasing missiles!ö

óWait a minute, itøs useless!ö

Amidst the echo of the first explosion, Second Lieutenant Kaji halted his subordinatesøretaliation.

Had it been a direct hit, the timing would have killed them all completely. However, it was not a direct hit. In which case, they must avoid sending missiles directly over the cityøs skies towards an unknown flying object ó even greater harm might fall on Tokyo. The best option would be to attack the object after it left the city.

(í They attacked us when we were completely vulnerable. But since it wasnøt a direct hit, the enemy must have some other sort of agenda.)

Second Lieutenant Kaji sensed this instinctively.

The air traffic control attendant sitting in the radar room on the other side of one pane of glass finally noticed the telephone on his desk and took up the receiver.

(Who the hell are you trying to call? We won't survive the next hit.)

Just then, the second attack came. The entire shelter rumbled and shook.

óAhh! !ö

óShit!ö

Among the five attendants two were female, but all the cries were masculine. Dust and sand rained from the ceiling.

The emergency lights began to flash, the computers switched over to the backup generator ó their monitors suddenly switching off for an instant before reappearing with the setup screens. The words óSensors downö and óRepair immediatelyö flashed on the screens.

The underground cable had been cut. And with the radar centers all around Tokyo cut, that meant the defense air squad had no way to communicate with the ground.

That was why óAnjuö was screaming.

Sceond Lieutenant Kaji called the system computer for the air defense squad óAnjuö for short. But it had absolutely nothing to do with that famous story.

óí Even with the Unknown captured, why was attack impossible?ö

The soldier on the other side of the glass grinned in a tight smile and spoke.

óí !ö

(Sending out that order is YOUR damn job. I keep telling you to stop using the defense microcircuit to seduce women.)

It took all the self-control that Kaji Second Lieutenant had to prevent himself from throwing the receiver onto the floor.

TH-THUNK!!

Again, it sounded like a room nearby had been hit. It sounded much farther away than the second hit, but even the emergency lights had turned off.

öUse the flashlight.ö

Inside the darkness, pitiful squeaking sounds from the machines could be heard. Anju had set up its second level emergency system.

With the computer's individual judgment, no more missiles would be launched. For the past 100 years, there was not a country that had tried to stand up to Japan. So if a country had decided to attack, retaliation would require a decision on the governmental level. And unless they fell into the hypothetical enemy's category, it would require more and more decisions of attacking or not attacking.

There is a danger in inputting possibilities into Anju's system ó it could be overwhelmed with the information of all the possible defense and emergency tactics.

But more than anything else, Sergei was not a special defense force, but a disaster relief force. Any defense tactics were only secondary in their repertoire.

And what's more, even though Anju's body was protected by an 8 point magnitude flow in an underground shelter, its only defense tactic was to destroy its own data before its sensors are destroyed.

óí No response!ö

óAnything from the Capital Headquarters Air Defense Center?!ö

óThereøs interference from the Minovsky Particles! Communications are down.ö

Minovsky Particles are particles which interfere with radio communication. They are used in anti-radio wave weapons. If these particles are shot into the air, no radio waves will transmit.

The only communication that can work in this case is a wired or laser communication system. But the sensors on those systems were damaged in the attack so all communications with headquarters were down.

Because of the war, most of Japanøs capitals had changed locations, but Tokyo still remained Japanøs largest city ó that had not changed.

To Sergei, it was obvious that no one had foreseen the possibility of Minovsky Particles being shot over Tokyoøs sky.

Because he was in charge of watching the radar screen, he happened to know about Minovsky Particles. In measures to deal with natural disasters and in disaster relief, it is the times before and after the disaster that become much more crucial ó not the time of the disaster itself.

However, in battles where high-power machines are doing huge amounts of damage, the battle can be won or lost in the first two minutes. So it is how one reacts just after a disaster that will set the stage for either victory or defeat.

It was a totally different ballpark from disaster relief.

óTake the line thatøs still usable and set an interceptor departure. How is Daisanka doing? Intercept to Tender Gear as well.ö

öIøm attempting to set that up via a normal telephone line. Sergeant Kurumada, Sergeant Kaohara, check to see whether or not headquarters can use the wireless!ö

Kaji, seeing that the soldiers at the Air Defense Center had finally begun to utter what could be called commands, gave the command to secure the communications line ö as embarrassing as it was for him in front of his subordinates.

öí The angle of approach, the speed, the target mass, the flight directioní Isnøt this Tender Gear?ö

öWhat did you say?!ö

Kaji was a bit offended that his female subordinate officer, Motomiya Ruizu used town-speak ö he was tired of hearing öTender Gear.ö

öEven Anju was confused ö thought it was a small manmade planetoidí ö

Kaji had no response for that.

<It was right around the time that we gained contact with Star Buster Projectí >

The wake of Annun hypothesized that it might be a comet and announced this to the international Star Buster Project. It was just after this that Annun was attacked in Tokyoøs sky.

öFrom above we have strong accounts that it was Tender Gear. Do you think thatøs not so?ö

The soldier on the other side of the glass took the phone receiver from upstairs and yelled into Kaji's receiver.

“We're not going outside and looking up at the sky!” rang his voice.

Even Anju was confused. But the data that it could be Tender Gear should show up in the display.

“?! Really? I see! ”

But even Kaji was not that haughty. He took out the small TV he had sneaked in unbeknownst to his squadron and plugged its antenna into the plug.

(“Even a cut cable is better than no cable at all.”)

Kaji searched through the cable channels and stared at the shoulders of the soldiers who were scurrying in front of the display screen.

When Sergei called in the national defense squad — a squadron with disaster relief as its primary duty — the title “Save Japan” was used and that is what they were still called.

So even though they were not the military, and while their jurisdictions ended at matters of defense, it was left behind in former military protocol because calling the organization by many letters when it had only one or two officers was a difficult thing.

This brought them disapproval from the public, but the government overcame the opposition and declared that Sergei is a disaster relief squadron. And even within Sergei, the mission was to create a positive image for the disaster relief squadron that would oppose the twenty-first century's world order.

Inside the screen with a beeping scanning line, Kaji continued to search through the channels for anything that resembled a video image.

ó The Japanese citizens must resist the military power!ö
That voice suddenly hit Kaji's ears.

óAh!...ö

The screen was filled only with scanning lines, but a clearly accented Japanese voice was coming through his mini TV.

ó We are a military institution ó that is why we are attacked. This is the fate of any militaristic regime. The military fat cats who are holding the Japanese government hostage should get themselves as far away from us as possible. That is what Avenir saysí ö

óWhat was that?! Lieutenant!ö

Motomiya Ruiz had peeked in on Kaji's TV ó the other three officers had left the space.

óI'm not sure. It's just some foreigner speaking Japaneseí ö

óA militaristic nation's top priority is supreme rule. Even if they try to avoid smugness, it always births a dictatorship. We can learn that from history. Avenir's philosophical outlook is much broader ó the world and the universe are its concern. It wants the help of the people in the island called Japan ó the people who wish for unity.ö

óAvenirí ? What is thatí ö

óWas Avenir mentioned?ö

Kaji was busy puzzling over how the invaders had possibly hijacked the signal. He hadn't been listening to the actual contents of the message.

<The Minovsky Particles usually don't impact that large an area. This message must be audible to a good percentage of the Japanese populationí >

While grieving over this reality, the lines of Motomiya's and Konoeda's young necks in the reflection of the TV screen glowed alluringly in the warped light. He considered that to be a plus, at least.

Chapter 2: Electro-Jack

“...All cautionary measures for Tokyo are being handled by myself, Beston Cooliger. The Japanese citizens must destroy Sergei’s political administration and restructure Japan into a democracy. If they fail to do this, their country will fall into a terrorist regime even worse off than it is now.”

The English-accented Japanese voice sounded very gentle.

“...We, the human race, have finally matured enough to the point where we are capable of governing ourselves. So we need to be confident in our abilities. If Japan lets herself be removed from the world community, that will mean her death. If the people who live on this island lose their sense of freedom, the history they have so carefully built all these centuries will lose its meaning. Avenir has sent me, Beston Cooliger, to this land to deliver this important message to you all.”

Lines were all over the TV monitor, but even so the man named Beston Cooliger’s face could be faintly distinguished. He seemed to be wearing an astronaut’s space suit. His voice sounded like it had been recorded in advance.

“Tender Gear, and Alafman, have been sent so that Avenir could make use of me, Beston Cooliger. No other attachments. Just Alafman and Beston Cooliger.”

“What’s with this guy...? Is he a narcissist?!”

Because the channel Hyuga Onore had been using for video games got messed up by the electro-jack, he was very annoyed.

He opened the curtains at his bedroom’s northern window.

From the spaces between the rows of high rise apartments, excluding the apartments facing the Shinjuku direction, from the window on the fortieth floor, it didn't look like anything out of the ordinary was happening outside.

Hyuga Onore had been skipping out on high school.

His body just lacked energy. That was his only reason.

His punctual parents had left for work and for lunch he was eating the box lunch his mother had made him.

First period, he'd had cooking class – which was why he was feeling ill. All morning, he read through his textbooks for the day. This only took a couple hours. Then he did his English hearing drills. By the first thing that afternoon, he'd set the screen on the American Channel's discussion game, "Saint Relative."

It's a game where the players get to be gods, creating countless worlds. Points were determined by how these worlds were governed. Onore particularly liked the Shakespearian English that was used in the game. You could repeat the audio when needed, so it was perfect for studying English.

Between his room and the living room's TV, he'd been exposed to both scenes, but neither seemed to report any particular anomaly.

As for the TV, just as with the monitor in his room, the screen had been overtaken by Beston's warbled message.

This screen showed Beston's robust size more clearly.

"Tokyo Station?!"

Onore's eyes could not ignore the interesting looking building's roof that appeared behind the man, nor the sparkling lines that went from right to left.

From the kitchen's western window, there was very little empty space before the wall of the neighboring high rise apartment. But from its sharp angle, he could still catch a glimpse of something falling in the sky.

It was a silver colored object.

"It can't be..."

Thinking the object might appear again in the southern sky, Onore ran into the living room and out onto the veranda.

The silver object, just as Onore had predicted, was running right to left above the many high rise apartment buildings.

Whoosh...

The sound of flight came from the distance. Then, after a brief pause, a shadow whizzed by, catching the light of the sun from the right hand side as it sailed by.

RARRRR!!

A powerful echo covered the sky, the entire apartment building vibrating with the noise. Onore clutched his ears desperately in his hands.

“...?!”

The silver colored shining object looked humanoid in shape.

“Looks like it’s headed for Kokyo.”

Onore ran once more to the kitchen’s window. From there he could clearly see the UFO above the neighboring apartment’s roof, flying shakily towards the direction of the Kokyo Bridge.

Presently, Koukyo Park was also an army post of Sergei.

“That’s A Tender Gear...!”

Turning off the monitor in his room, Onore threw on a jumper, put power into his pocket-display, and changed the TV to a different channel. Every station was playing Beston’s message.

“Oh, shit...”

Having felt firsthand the impact of seeing the human-shaped UFO flying near him, he suddenly realized that staying at home would be dangerous.

He didn’t think he was overreacting. He saw it was entirely possible that the UFO was just circling his own roof.

And what's more, now that Sergei had Japan in its clutches, ordinary citizens like Onore were at least a lot more disaster conscious and had been formulating plans for evacuation.

In this case it was not an earthquake, so relocation to a land reclamation site was normal procedure. Onore cut the electricity to the house and ran outside.

He also had an ulterior motive – if that UFO really was a Tender Gear, he wanted to get a closer look at it with his own eyes.

However, there was no manual for citizens on how to protect oneself from an air raid, so his reaction was slow. Onore's age group had been brought up on cheesy science fiction movies and unlikely stories. So the word “air raid” had been casually accepted into his vocabulary and he was able to accept the situation into his reality.

The elevator was still working, after all, and the housewife who lived in the same building complained about the racket from Onore's pocket monitor.

“But this is the real thing, ma'am. There's someone who's electro-jacked the system and is causing an air raid over Tokyo's skies.”

“Oh, please. Just because you were scolded by your elders, that doesn't give you an excuse to make up silly stories like that.”

Young housewives were the most hated demographic of Onore and his generation.

After a long awkward moment with the puffed up housewife, Onore jumped onto an electric bike that had been left in his household's parking spot. He zipped on it out from the underground.

“...Ya hear? It's an air raid.”

"Sergei hasn't said anything, right? Where are the police and firemen when you really need them?"

Voices from adults could be heard by the apartment's entrance – what they were saying excited Onore.

If you stay standing around squabbling about that, you'll wind up killed.

When Onore's electro-bike elevated slightly at a tiny bridge over a stream, he looked back towards the center of the city (though knowing he couldn't see it). He figured if he made it to a land reclamation site, he'd be able to find some Tender Gear who weren't with Sergei.

That UFO was making the movements of someone on the attack. There should be a huge cruising radius!

That was the boy's true wish. He wanted the machine to be all-powerful. However, that sort of thing never really happened to him. And it wasn't as if wishing to see such a thing would make it happen. He realized all too well the harsh truths of his reality.

So that was why he put some hope in the thrill of this occurrence. And besides, once he got to the land reclamation site – as long as he ignored the stench of the trash – he would be able to see the crisp scenery of the ocean. This made him ride all the faster.

That was the sort of boy Onore was... so he never could have imagined that very soon he would be yanked into an unthinkable world.

The X Wing's Air Superiority Fighter was destroyed – that had been the first clue in telling the citizens what had happened that day.

Before that, on one corner of Kokyo Park where three vehicles had been parked, two Tender Gear called “Musshan” were released and half destroyed, but that never made it onto the TV’s news, so none of the ordinary citizens knew about it.

After the electro jacking from the mysterious man Beston ended, and all the television sets around the city returned to their usual programming, a camera set on the roof of an independent building showed images of an X Wing attacking.

The wings at the top of the monitor suddenly shot out white smoke. It really did look like cheap special effects from a miniature and a fog machine.

While being fooled by these “fake CG effects,” the people probably thought that the object on their screen spreading its big wings was nothing more than a paper airplane.

It lasted for two breaths, dancing while headed in the direction of Ebisu, passing over the faded buildings of the Ebisu Town high rise apartments. It exploded and caused a shockwave.

“Where is it?! Where did it fall?! This isn’t a drill, ya know? There’s a real air raid going on here!”

Screams from the cameramen from at least three different stations could be heard at the same time.

Even though tone can carry many linguistic misinterpretations, listening to the comments from the reporters and announcers from the various TV stations

showed that something unfathomable was happening. It was unclear what, exactly, but everyone was hysterical.

The Sergei second lieutenant Kaji and the joint chiefs of staff in the underground shelter in Ichigaya were listening to the voices on their pocket televisions.

The underground shelter was lit only by the various display screens here and there.

“...The initial report was only received through broadcast television. Nothing has changed at all in the system since the great Osaka-Kobe earthquake and the Tokyo earthquake!”

“Sergei is under jurisdiction from broadcast television. Getting upset won’t change anything about it.”

Motomiya stared up at the second lieutenant from the light of the pocket television screen.

“This isn’t ants at a picnic – don’t be so calm. Then, why are there no monitors here that show all the Japanese channels?!”

“We were supposed to establish that system this year if funding was sufficient.”

“But that’s too late.”

Lieutenant Kaji, in his excitement to clench his fist, accidentally brushed his fingertips against Motomiya’s rear end.

“Please stop that.”

“Your fault for being too close. Get away from me.”

Lieutenant Kaji, having felt for the first time the fiery vigor of the female officer, felt a little confused at first,

mmm

Chapter 3: Tender Gear

“Raizen, Son, don’t come crying to me if you’re late.”

When First Lieutenant Fubuki Kei barked that, it was when his Tender Gear, “Mushan”, pranced about the room.

Pafoooon!

The cloud of dust from the reeling of the hover nozzle was so massive it made one wonder just how dirty that concrete floor was this whole time.

Then, a second identical vehicle twirled its arms front and back, hovered over the guidance path that connected the apron to the runway, and jerked itself into high elevation in an instant.

Iruma Military Base had no air defense craft. What it did have was the Phantom F-16, a classic plane intended for exhibition, and small transporter planes intended for carrying messages and transporting small loads.

This small 8-hour-a-day work squad in Daisanka was permitted to use this area, but this base,

compared to the other bases around Tokyo Harbor, was known to insiders as a “demotion base” – which was not a rumor, but a sad truth.

The independent land, sea, and air forces had been disbanded due to bankruptcy and had been sent to Daisanka as fulltime employees for maintenance and security. However, there still remained some prejudices among the troops for the former land, sea, and air force men, and Daisanka tended to be wary of outsiders. So people were always walking on eggshells.

“So we have to rely on civilian TV to tell us what’s going on... This makes Sergei’s effectiveness worse than pie in the sky hopes,” Fubuki complained while still making sure that the succession machine was still following him.

It could be called “jumping flight” - presently it was flying 500 meters above the water level.

Only a very thoughtless person would think to fly a Tender Gear – something so far removed from the shape of an airplane – over the roofs of civilians.

If a person believed that a human shaped machine such as a Hover Nozzle could fly, he wouldn’t be able to work in Daisanka.

Tender Gear can hit very small, specific targets (not meant for mass destruction). So for the security and maintenance team it was a highly useful machine.

That was the opinion that Sergei had released to the world.

First Lieutenant Fubuki used this to bring control to the country's rabble-rousers many times. Because of the violent actions taken over and over again, Fubuki had been officially reprimanded many times over this.

His companions who entered the force at the same time as him had mostly been promoted, but a few others had been sent to the intra-ministerial bureau to do plastering work.

The only reason Fubuki hadn't been tossed to the ground yet was because of the distractions caused by the few others in his class who had done worse – the next time Fubuki failed, his job would really be in jeopardy.

A twenty-eight year old bachelor.

One could say he was extremely right-winged. If you asked him, he would say that supremacy brought on by force was compulsory. And the masses must not hide this principal belief.

After graduating high school, he entered Sergei and sought out the most soldier-like jobs there. He ended up enrolling in the Defense University, passed test after test, and ended up in Daisanka.

Until then, he'd put on an innocent face.

It wasn't until he'd become a pilot of Tender Gear, a "visitor" of Daisanka, and been placed on the front line that Fubuki let his true colors show.

Even on his peaceful missions, he used Tender Gear's Rifle Gun (a tiny Balkan grenade launcher), and would terrorize the rabble-rousers with Tender Gear's manipulator.

He crushed and dominated.

Fubuki had his reasons – he felt the more threatening he was, the more powerful he would become.

He was also very short tempered.

New recruits who had been placed into his unit, Raizen Kyoko and Son Keiji, had finished their Tender Gear training at Hamamatsu and had been sent there by Iruma just that spring.

The reason they were sent to Fubuki was not because the higher ups were generous to him. It was because due to pressure from his peers, they'd sent talented soldiers to spy on him from the inside.

Raizen Kyoko and Son Keiji's skills and sense of public peace were very strong and very much in tune with Sergei's ideals.

And their Tender Gear, set to act against reactionaries, were just as quick to react as Fubuki's temper was to fly off the handle.

“So, what? You’re saying I should end my life without once using Tender Gear?”

“This would be the ideal scenario. Even if use of Tender Gear ends here at Iruma Base without being used in battle, no one will complain. We don’t want to waste money either.”

“We, the peace keepers at Daisanka, are only here as a last resort. When the government has failed, we will spring into action. Therefore, we do not take orders from anyone other than HQ. Orders from within are seen as mutinous and will be punished.”

Son Keiji was able to make even the most grim laws sound pleasant by the way he talked.

This was Fubuki's first time dealing with difficult coworkers like Keiji and Kyoko.

"Keiji, Son, do you think things are headed in a dangerous direction?" Fubuki asked while conducting a test of the wireless and checking to see that the following craft was no threat.

"Sergei's primary objective is disaster relief. Any actions that disobey orders are problematic to the higher ups, but to us it's no problem...sort of..."

"What do you mean 'sort of'?"

"The process by which you receive orders seems ambiguous to you."

"You bastard – who do you think you are, my superior?!"

"Incorrect, sir. I apologize for saying that."

Fubuki heard a faint, but distinct noise coming from the Minovsky Particle interference. But it was not serious enough to require computer investigation.

"Raizen! Did you hear that?! Son, you too. There's some background noise. Tell me the cause of it."

With his voice in his own wireless communicator, Fubuki asked the young officers to confirm the source of the noise.

"I don't hear any noise."

“Mike check over – you’re good to sing, sir.”

“Idiots! Show a little more urgency here!”

The two rookies then spat out responses in a jumble.

“Oh, I cannot believe it, sir! There should never be Minovsky Particle interference inside here.”

“It must be from the mystery Tender Gear. Communications are down in Ichigaya.”

It was just then that the three Tender Gears surpassed the sixth annulation line.

“A sight-battle is also a possibility. Be prepared for that.”

“...You can’t mean...”

“To the front and to the right, you saw an explosion. You saw it, didn’t you!”

Fubuki pointed to where an X-wing’s air defense system had been hit and was twirling to the ground.

The two young officers had no rebuttal.

There was no time to complain now. They had been too late to save it.

Fubuki took an uncharacteristically calm stance as he gazed over Ikebukuro, Shinjuku, Ichigaya, and Shinagawa.

Discerning the altitude was difficult, but Fubuki was confident in his ability to look over all the cities.

A cloud of dust could faintly be seen coming from Ichigaya.

(Is anything over there still moving...?!)

It was then that Fubuki saw, for a brief instant, a flash of light about 1500 meters in the sky above Tokyo Station.

It was very far off.

“It’s over the sea now?!”

The two young officers probably had not yet seen what Fubuki had. Fubuki was unsettled as he remembered Beston’s words, that Japan had fallen into a militaristic regime. Because if that really were the case, Japan would be better able to heal and protect itself. Fubuki suspected that Japan might have a different secret military operation opposite of Sergei’s ideals and prowess.

He believed that an army could not advance in skill without questioning the orders of the government.

Chapter 4: Coring

Despite having 5 lanes, the bridge that is known as K23 is just for the coming and going of the capital's garbage trucks.

Even so, its status as a public road means ordinary vehicles are allowed to drive over it. However there's only a garbage disposal facility on the land reclamation site at the end of it so, apart from the waste trucks, only those who've come to fish use it.

Although it resembles a former garbage dump on reclaimed land, its purpose changed considerably and now there's almost no smell at all.

Besides strictly enforcing the separate collection of waste, raw garbage's stench was degraded and it was made into fertiliser by means of scattering EMO stimulated by effective microorganisms over it. By mixing this EMO with dismantled plastics, they could be perfectly recycled.

Even so, they needed reclaimed land for a factory to process all of this, and for temporary storage of the garbage.

Hyuga Honore was angered by the garbage trucks driving along the 5 lane highway between the basically uninhabited factories (short-statured buildings) as though they didn't know what had happened in the city center.

"Adults put their work first, they don't try to understand what happens before their very eyes."

He pulled out of the garbage disposal factory and crossed over the flat bridge, entering the reclaimed land used to store garbage.

Behind him to the left the silver airframe came back through the sky. He thought he caught sight of three Musshan Tender Gears pursuing it, but the garbage trucks got in his way and he couldn't be sure.

But as he was crossing over the bridge he saw an explosion to his right at sea.

"...Shit...!"

The red and white flash breaking out from the centre of the ring of black smoke was exactly the same as an explosion he'd seen in a movie.

Instinctually he revved the accelerator as far as it would go and jumped the bike onto the reclaimed land.

There were several slagheap-type rises there that from an outsider's perspective looked like better shelter than the factory, so he felt that would be the place to hide.

But the paved road cut out, and when the electro-bike hit dirt Honore realised there'd be no hiding if the Tender Gear's nuclear fusion reactor exploded.

“There’s no way something like that could happen here.”

That thought could only help to calm his worries, but the slagheap obscured his view to the west as he tried to catch his breath and he began to panic.

If it exploded it would make his coming here meaningless.

“...Oof!”

As Honore mounted the bike and turned the handlebars he revved the engine. Unlike gas motors, the electric one in his bike was pathetically powerless. Loose dirt sprayed out behind him and Tokyo Bay came into view as he came out onto the breakwater.

“...I’m doing it!”

When Honoré first caught sight of the Tender Gear skimming across the sea surface he was impressed, but in the next instant the three machines rose into the sky to put on speed.

They were probably the mobile suits belonging to the Tokyo unit that was stationed at the Imperial Palace’s park.

“...!?”

Honore followed the direction the three suits took along the breakwater not because he’d forgotten the danger of explosions.

He had his mind set and wanted nothing more than to see what they were going to do.

Imagining that he might be able to see a dog fight between that silver Tender Gear and Sergei’s Musshan

was thrilling.

“...!”

Honore heard a loud bang and when he looked up he imagined he could see sparkling silver dust falling.

In the sky above, the silver Tender Gear looked like it was standing agilely, but that was only Honore’s impression.

The suit wasn’t flying low enough to make out details, nor was it particularly close.

He thought the weaving Tender Gear might have been hit, but that was his imagination too.

The next time Honore saw them, they were close enough that he could identify the falling aircraft as a Musshan, but he couldn’t understand why an undamaged Musshan was dropping like garbage.

“...!”

Honore shuddered as the Musshan kicked up spray on the sea surface and he realised the silver suit was up to something terrible.

When he looked up with a feeling of hostility, he thought he saw a streaked light that looked like a needle going through the blue sky... Well, it was more of a hunch.

“...Seriously...!?”



When Honore realised the suit that had seemed to melt into the blue sky were going to come down much further away than before, he became aware that he'd made a huge mistake.

“...!?”

He'd come here thinking it would be better to be safe than sorry, but it seemed like staying at home would have been the right choice.

Suddenly he heard the rumbling exhaust noise of a hopper nozzle and when his eyes chased the sound he saw that the silver airframe was hovering not even a kilometer away on the south side of the same land reclamation site he was on.

“...! Is that the one they call Alafman!?”

Honore turned his bike towards the silver suit as it descended in an erect stance.

The reason for his current decision was the same as all of his actions: he didn't think ahead.

Although the rubbish piles obstructed his view once or twice, Honore could see the airframe known as Alafman landing calmly.

“...Sergei's Musshan were done in so easily, and now the enemy has time to relax... It doesn't seem like it's landing because it's taken damage.”

Honore instinctually knew that the silver airframe being undamaged was probably unheard of.

What!?

He stopped being able to hear the Tender Gear engine's high-pitched idling sound.

Then,

[...Avenir-san, the sky's good too, but we could swim in the ocean...]

A man's consciousness made a direct hit on Honore.

He realised that it belonged to the man called Beston Kriger who'd done the electro-jack.

The feeling and scent entwined in his consciousness felt the same as what had been on the TV.

So Honore twisted the throttle.

Whoosh!

His bike leapt forward and he came into position to be able to look down on the landing spot of the unfamiliar Tender Gear.

[Then why aren't you with Avenir!]

A female consciousness completely different to the sensation of Beston Kriger's voice jumped into Honore's perception.

At that moment, Honore was airborne.

"Don't do that!"

Yelled Honore without knowing why, but he and the bike were falling.

Thud!

“Ugh! What does that mean?”

Honore sat up in a flash and then,

Bang!

The reverberations of a pistol being fired rang in his ears.

“What the hell...!?”

From the many things going on in front of him, Honore sighted something with spread wings on its back, flying up holding the body of a semi-transparent, seemingly nude girl.

Was this a hallucination...!?

But he wasn't confused and he was fully conscious, so he stood up.

Beyond the hallucination Honore saw a figure descending from the silver aircraft and then running off to the left of the suit's feet.

“...!!”

Honore mounted his bike, and gunned it towards the silver suit.

What!?

But before he even had a chance of comprehending what he'd witnessed,

Grrrrrr...rr, rr, rr... rrrr...

The three Tender Gears descended while spreading out.

Musshan...!?

Seeing the silver aircraft was unreactive, two of the Musshan went around and cut in behind it, and the third Musshan spouted exhaust fumes out of its hopper nozzle from behind Honore.

“...Someone fell!”

The unit that held a Vulcan cannon equipped in its left hand was landing menacingly to the centre right of Honore.

“Daisanka’s Musshan!!”

Honore’s body was pelted with the intense sandstorm kicked up by its down exhaust and staggered backwards.

[What the hell is Avenir up to!]

A female consciousness reverberated within Honore.

That’s how he became aware that the figure behind the silver suit was trying to sneak into the concrete debris to the left.

<Is that their voice!?>

He perceived a consciousness like the sweetness of roasting rice cakes.

Whoosh! The Musshan's landing gear let out a clamorous noise.

"Why are you interfering!? It looks like someone's died!"

Honore turned around to yell at the landed Musshan as he chased after the dark figure.

"Avenir, go swim in the sea... I can't take it anymore..."

"Then shouldn't you be with Avenir?"

"I can't do that!"

First Lieutenant Fubuki Kei perceived the woman and youth's minds in the same quality as Beston Krieger's.

"Unh...!?"

The reclaimed land where the Tender Gear airframe known as Alafman crouched could be seen from the middle of the deep blue Bay of Tokyo.

Something had stopped the Tender Gear from continuing what it was doing. It was much larger than the Musshan Fubuki had been entrusted with.

"What is this?"

Although Fubuki felt physically restless, he was aware and judged that

There's a pilot lying down under the Tender Gear that has its front armor open... Even if I'm wrong, we'll get no resistance from the Tender Gear.

And in that way he confirmed that his own consciousness was normal.

“Raizen, Son, stay there.”

Fubuki called out to the two youngsters, landing his own craft in front of Alafman.

From the pilot’s fallen state it seemed he’d collapsed after fainting or had been shot, but the latter was unlikely.

As Fubuki landed his own aircraft, the landing gear folded up and the trunk inclined forward.

The boy looked like he was being chased by the figure running from behind the Alafman.

“Three people...”

Fubuki unholstered his gun and raised the visor on his pilot suit. He raised the front armor and pushed down on the console panel.

“This is First Lieutenant Fubuki Kei. I’m in front of the unidentified aircraft. I’m about to start my investigation.”

Although Sergei would deny it, following procedure to a tee was the only martial habit that Fubuki had embraced. The radio that connected him to his two subordinates should have also been monitored at General Staff Headquarters, but that line appeared to remain dead.

The fixed manipulator became scaffolding between the ground and the cockpit and as he alighted on the reclaimed land,

Fubuki fired his gun at the figure running towards the left-hand embankment.

It was a feint.

“Son, you should see two people on your right hand side. Capture them.”

“Yes, sir...”

Fubuki approached the silver airframe and his eyes didn’t stray from above the giant lying under the craft.

A fairy...?

He thought it was a joke.

He could see a winged fairy. No, it looked more like an angel. Like a Japanese celestial maiden, it had a kimono sash-like cloth wrapped around its body.

A winged baby? A girl...!?

There didn’t seem to be just one. Several?

They laughed. They mourned. He saw them fresh faced after outpourings of sympathy.

...How many of them are there!?

They were flitting about, flying past each other, so there couldn’t just be one... He didn’t understand... Fluttering. He had the impression they were going straight up as well.

They swayed, soared and danced on the bright silver background.

Were their wings attached to their backs or did they spring out from their arms? It wasn't clear. They stood up on the giant's forehead and chest, swaying like a mirage.

Whoooooosh!

The sandstorm hit Fubuki full on from the side.

It felt like the salty sea breeze got stronger.

“...!!”

The flickering shook off his hallucinations.

Fubuki collected himself and marched forward, heading towards the man lying at Alafman's feet. But all that was there was a giant's corpse.

“He looks like the man known as Beston Kreiger...”

When Fubuki planted his feet on either side of the giant's head to verify that, he was disgusted to find the man's expression defied his expectations.

...!? Why does he look so happy?

Fubuki felt like he was in a nightmare.

A chill ran through his whole body, but Fubuki couldn't resist taking another look at the man's face.

He turned and looked straight down into his face.

His impression of the man's expression didn't change from when he'd look at it upside down.

He had a bullet hole on his forehead but it shone and so he hadn't noticed it.

"...Why does he look so happy? ...Almost like an orgasm face..."

Orgasm face - The face of one in ecstasy.

"...Did he go insane?"

Fubuki was shaken by the associations his own mind made from what he saw, and he raised his eyes to the cockpit in front of him.

The Tender Gear was larger by far than the Musshan but their basic structures were the same.

As humanoid machines, vehicles with a cockpit installed, they were basically the same shape.

"This is a strange craft..."

Thinking about the airframe, Fubuki's feelings settled and he holstered his gun.

I was flying above the concrete debris. This woman, black from top to bottom, suddenly stopped.

"You're the one who killed that person, right? Why? You shouldn't have done this."

I didn't know what I was saying. The disgust I felt for even speaking to this gloomy woman was too overwhelming.

She was that kind of woman. A leather jacket, leather pants and boots, a piercing flashing up on the right side of her lips. Dark eyes and long, fluttering hair. You couldn't imagine a more stereotypical white woman with bad upbringing.

“That was a fairy’s dance... you want to see more of it? Little brat!” She spoke Japanese.

Her pierced lips spoke in an unsteady manner. I could see how her hands, tucked into the pockets of her leather jacket, began to move. I didn’t expect to have a gun aimed at me, so I took a leap without giving it too much thought. Even feeling the bullets hitting my thighs after landing near her couldn’t stop me from clinging to the automatic rifle she pulled out.

“God damn!”

It seems like she’s reverting to English when her blood pressure rises. Our bodies twisted, stirring up the surrounding dust us while my arms were tightly clutched around her wrist. As my shoulder bumped into her chest, I could feel the warmth of her body. Suddenly, I was overcome by the fear of losing this fight.

To avoid being intimidated by the rage in her greyish blue eyes, I didn't look at her face but instead tried to push her chin up using my elbow.

“Arg...!”

Using both of my arms, I managed to make her drop the gun by twisting her wrist around. As soon as I heard something heavy hitting the ground, I tried hitting the woman's stomach with a kick while turning towards the gun on the ground.

“Shit!”

She swore at me. My hands could reach the gun! I felt like I was faster than her, and then...

Swoooosh!

A cloud of dust violently hit my back, knocking the gun a few yards back.

“Wha-?”

A single Musshan was slowly approaching the surface, hitting down exhaust just in time. I tried making my way through the dust cloud, crouching in the direction of the gun as the Musshan's landing gear reached out to the surface and blocked my path.

“Don't move. If you move, you will be disposed of by the Daisanka.”

The intimidating voice of a woman rose up above our heads. Being disposed of by the Daisanka would equal being killed, of course.

“Got it...!?”

As I turned around to face the Musshan, I could see the woman in black sneering at me, throwing her hands up in the air while making slutty poses.

“Is she mistaking this place for a strip club...!?”

She was behaving like that. I was starting to feel that she wasn’t even serious, and it confused me. I noticed that there was a replica of a Harley Davidson Sportster standing behind her back. A rather large bag was tucked onto its rear frame.

As stereotypical a combination as it can get...

I realized that this woman was what one would call a wanderer. An outsider, if put into modern terms. I gazed into the deep dark muzzles of several barrels that were part of the Musshan’s gatling gun sitting right above my head.

“If I were killed by that, I would be blown into thousands of bits and pieces without feeling any pain. That would be fine with me.”

That’s what I’m thinking for a second.

“Woman, climb up the concrete hill. You too, boy.”

Although the young woman’s voice which was amplified by the speaker had a charming side to it, there was also a lot of power behind it.

“That was legitimate self-defense! I thought I was lending the Daisanka a hand!”

With her eyes turned up, the woman in black climbed the concrete rubble while yelling at the cockpit of the Musshan.

... I could hear what she was thinking...

Hearing her words, I immediately felt like that. The voice coming from the Musshan’s cockpit though swept away all my doubts and unrest.

“WE will decide on that. Boy! If you’re a man, follow that woman and climb that concrete hill already!”

Chapter 5: Inspire Engine?

Light emanated from between Beston Krieger's eyebrows. The mark left by the bullet on his now-veiled-in-eternal-bliss forehead

his now-veiled-in-eternal-bliss forehead was shining like the light on Buddha's forehead, the light that's said to shine on all.

“...”

Honore sees it too, and the reason the first lieutenant's subordinates on either side of him are quiet is most likely because they see it as well.

“Guh! Uuuuuh...” The woman in black started groaning and kneeled down by the giant's face.

Her quiet weeping continued, obscured occasionally by the sound of swooshing dust.

Had the weight of the sin of killing someone made her regret shooting...?

Honore was watching her from the corner of his eye, unable to take his eyes off the light.

But that person came all the way here, chosen by Avenir. He definitely doesn't have any regrets even if he ended up like that. That's why this happened... were his thoughts, somewhere in the back of his head.

“What do you think?” The first lieutenant spoke to his two young subordinates.

“Huh? What do you mean, Sir?” answered the man automatically.

You fool!” screamed the first lieutenant, but Honore knew it was directed at the corpse on the ground, not his subordinate. There wasn’t any reason for it, he just did.

“I saw it,” said his female subordinate firmly.

“Saw what?”

“The light and an Angel Mark coming out from that man’s forehead...” She was hesitant, probably because she was aware that what she was saying was unthinkable.

Honore held his breath, expecting the first lieutenant, who was a soldier to the bone, to hit the woman for that answer. However, the first lieutenant took a breath, raised his hand up while squatting by the giant’s arms and prayed.

The tanned, intrepid profile. The stubborn expression and glint in his eyes he saw when he looked him straight in the face. This man with the feeling of your stereotypical officer from Daisanka paid his respects to the mysterious pilot. Honore felt that the man himself wasn’t even aware of that. The

visitors who never forget respect for their enemies, even subconsciously, are ideal Sergei-ists. It's just boys like Honore's idealized image, not the one commonly accepted in the world. That said, if you asked if Honore is a Leftist who supports Sergei's policy, the answer would be no. He simply admires cool things and likes specialized equipment like Tender Gear. It's nothing as grand as a creed. He's the kind of boy who has no intention of getting obsessed with stuff like that and making his life boring. And Honore is not alone in that, it's a trend amongst the majority of high schoolers these days. Girls, club practice and becoming a hero are about all they're interested in; in the case of students with more-or-less defined objectives, their biggest concern is having academic ability to move up to a university.

The First Lieutenant checked around the chest of the pilot lying on the ground.

“He doesn’t have any dog tags either.” He must have felt content with that, because he turned to the woman in black, who was still bent over and weeping, and said “You said you’re Hoole Ker? Stop crying, it shames your skill.”

The First Lieutenant took the woman's gun from his male subordinate and removed the magazine.

"..." Honore didn't listen to the First Lieutenant. Ever since he'd seen the head of the man lying on the ground turn dark, he hadn't been able to take his eyes off that place.

"There's no point grieving over it now."

"Hmph, hehehe... I'm not regretting anything. I only shot him because he said I can."

"...?"

When the woman in black shook off the weeping fit and showed a fake smile, Honore glanced from the squatting woman to the First Lieutenant standing in front of her. That fearless First Lieutenant seemed somewhat perplexed to him.

"That's why, I was happy because I knew he'd died happily. I felt relieved. That's why I cried. Besides, the Avenir he talked about... I realized that's what I've been looking for ever since I was born, so who wouldn't be happy."

Towards the end she switched from Japanese to English, so the First Lieutenant shouted in English, “You sound like a lunatic!”

“What do you mean by “*lunatic*”!?” said the woman called Hoole Ker, bending forward and opening her eyes wide. The piercing in her lip was really annoying to Honore.

“What you say is illogical, don’t you think!? He hasn’t mentioned Avenir even once since he used electro-jack! If you’re looking for Avenir, then why did you kill him!? You can’t find out anything if you do, right!?”

“Who cares about electro-jack? Avenir may be just like the Mother who abandoned me. So, there was that Avenir guy inside the head of that man calling himself Beston Krieger, isn’t that just hilarious? And then, what...? She sent me swimming in the Tokyo Bay, that’s not funny! But he told me I would find happiness if I reached Avenir... Don’t make me laugh... The only ones who can find happiness by joining someone like that are naive people like Beston Krieger! That’s why I killed him. And then, he thanked me, there’s no doubt about it.” Still kneeling on the ground, Honore was staring at the woman lashing out at the First Lieutenant.

... It may sound like she's just babbling nonsense because she's scared of Daisanka's interrogation, but what she says is truth... I guess the only difference is how we perceive it. The piercing on the right side of her lip was annoyingly bright, probably because of the sun's position. Honore was prejudiced against women like Hoole Ker, but he had the feeling she was talking about much the same things as those he'd sensed. The only difference was that Hoole Ker used the word "Mother" as a metaphor for Avenir. Honore saw something when she shot Beston Krieger, but he's unable to explain it. However, listening to her made him start to wonder if Beston Krieger hadn't brought something unbelievably good with him. ...*Something good... But, if it's something unlimitedly-good, there are also people who view it as an innuendo directed at their own lives and hate it.* Listening to Hoole Ker's conversation with the First Lieutenant, Honore realized something that he hadn't thought of until now. Unless you think like that, there's no possibility of a strange sense of friendship or sense of peace to come when he saw the corpse of the giant. He didn't have any unpleasant feelings, and he didn't feel any distress or sadness while looking at the corpse. That was because in exchange for his death, the man emanated something completely different. Though it may have been Avenir's affection, there was no way to confirm that anymore. However, listening to the Outsider Hoole Ker, made him begin to suspect that she felt, or maybe knew, all kinds of things... many more.

Once the First Lieutenant Fubuki confirmed that his subordinate, Officer Reizen had copied Hoole Ker's Identity Card into the computer, he said, "This Tender Gear has waged an act of aggression against Tokyo. As someone who prevented it, you deserve a National Honor award. Are we clear? I don't have the slightest wish to make you into a murderer. However, you're also a citizen of the USA. We will check your background."

"Investigate what? Even that gun I took from that pilot."

"How?"

"I was sleeping here and his Tender Gear came and started brazenly descending..."

"So you're trying to say you jumped at a man wearing a pilot suit and stole his gun in the meantime? Yeah, I wish I could see THAT!"

"First Lieutenant, the people from the technical research institute are coming," shouted a man who had climbed on the back of the Alafman airframe.

"Huh!?"

Above their heads, Air Defense fighters started inspecting the reclaimed land, circling around it at low altitude, and from the direction of Chiba, there were several helicopters closing in while observing the situation.

“You should be able to use the radio. We’re gonna be in trouble if we don’t respond, Officer Reizen.”

“Yes!” The female officer hurriedly stepped on the manipulator of her machine and entered the cockpit.

“Daisanka, Iruma Air Base...”

The female officer who was intimidating him and the woman calling herself Hoole Ker had really clear-cut looks, she certainly didn’t look like a woman who would be assigned to a frightening unit like Daisanka, so he found himself fascinated by her. He wasn’t composed enough to notice that while dealing with the strange sensation emanating from Beston Krieger. But now that he had that time, he also realized that he would have to go through Daisanka’s interrogation, which made him depressed.

Hopefully I will get away with just being a witness...

Daisanka is Sergei’s police force, so while it plays the role of military police, it’s also a unit whose goal is to search and destroy disturbing elements who are dissatisfied with the policy of the current government. There is no notion of actively recruiting informers and the freedom of expression is guaranteed. However, the Daisanka are still seen by citizens as frightening,

because every year - without fail - they mobilize their Tender Gears in preparation for possible extremists or far-left-wing-related incidents that may, or may not happen, and they take drastic measures against terrorists.

“Say, Mister First Lieutenant... Do you think Avenir exists, just like he said...? This machine, at least, wasn’t designed by that guy. Do you think Avenir entrusted his prophecy to him?”, Hoole Ker asked in a coaxing voice.

...She’s smart..., thought Honore to himself.

“If that’s the case, there’s one thing that doesn’t make sense. Why the one who gives prophecies didn’t protect the one he’s entrusted his prophecy to?”

“I’ve been thinking about that too... while crying. And it came to me. Unless he did that, nobody wouldn’t look, would they? Create a shocking incident to attract attention - even Jesus Christ used that method.”

“Stop imagining things.” shouted First Lieutenant Fubuki just as a big, two-rotor heli landed with a “thunk”, the downburst raising clouds of dust.

The door on the side of the heli opened and a group of soldiers ran out.

“Where is First Lieutenant Fubuki!?”

The way they speak is just awful.

Walking towards the men, Fubuki looked at the woman in black, Hoole Ker, and asked “Why do you suddenly feel like you want to meet Avenir? He’s like the Mother you hate, right?”

“Hatred is not everything I feel towards my Mother.”

“You sure are self-centered. Don’t decide things based on the moment. You’re the only one who can help yourself. It’s because of ulterior motives like looking for help from strangers that you don’t stay in one place. That’s why that, even after becoming a Japanese citizen, you’re still an Outsider.”

“What’s wrong in being an Outsider!?” shouted Hoole Ker with her pierced lip, trying to prevent her hair being messed-up by the rotors, but the men from the heli who rushed to the First Lieutenant surrounded him and cut her off.

“Is there anything wrong with that unknown unit!?” asked a man with a Colonel’s strap on his shoulders, getting annoyed with the sound of the heli’s rotors.

“No damage. Pilot died on the spot.”

“Died on the spot!? What happened?” It was the Captain of the Technical Unit walking behind the Colonel.

“He was shot by a civilian. She acted in self-defense. She just got lucky and the man died on the spot.”

Honore saw the eyes of the officers from the heli all turn towards Hoole Ker, so he stepped up to her side without thinking. Hoole Ker, crouching on the ground, glanced at Honore coming her way, and paid no attention to the men. There were traces of tears on her cheeks. Honore jerked his chin showing that the men who came with the heli were bothering him, but Hoole Ker just grunted.

“...?” Honore felt like he’s lost his place.

The Colonel just gave Hoole Ker a glance and walked up to Alafman.

“It’s pretty big, isn’t it? I’ve never heard of a new unit like this being developed within Starbuster Project.”

“Yes, it’s a completely different type. Unlike Musshan or Nochik, it has a lot of unnecessary equipment too.” The young Technical Captain gets along well with the Colonel.

“There’s quite a lot of attachments and connectors. It probably landed using boosters.”

“The engine block is big... It’s 1.8 time bigger than a Musshan’s.”

“You go up from here.” After going around the unit, the Colonel put his foot on the Alafman’s left manipulator and climbed unsteadily up to the cockpit.

“Who is that?”

“Colonel Kashin from the Technical Research Institute. He was throwing a fit and saying he wants to investigate this enemy unit.” Honore could hear the non-commissioned officer who called himself the copilot of the heli explaining the situation to the First Lieutenant.

“Was there someone there from the Technical Research Institute in Kisarazu?” First Lieutenant Fubuki frowned at the words of the copilot.

“There are various circumstances. The tests of the new Tender Gears...”

“Fuh. Talk about dutiful,” sarcastically laughed Fubuki.

Even though he was complaining, First Lieutenant Fubuki wasn't really angry about a Technical Research Institute's Colonel marching onto the scene when the combat state hasn't been lifted yet. *Does he like Sergei, or does he like the Technical Officer?* Honore couldn't figure the Visitor called First Lieutenant Fubuki.